



Meeting Minutes
Friday, February 4, 2005
Wisconsin Rapids City Council Chambers
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

LRSC Members Present

Wisconsin Counties Association:

Dan Fedderly
Roger Laning
Dick Leffler
Emmer Shields

Wisconsin Towns Association:

Marilyn Bhend
Arlyn Helm
Gene Lueck
Marv Samson

Regional Planning Commissions/

Metro Planning Organizations:

Bob Beglinger (for Ken Yunker)
Don Kush
Walt Raith

League of Wisconsin Municipalities:

Bill Beil, Jr.
Dennis Jordan
Dennis Melvin

WisDOT Staff Present:

Scott Bush
Michael Erickson
Mary Forlenza

Wisconsin Alliance of Cities:

Dave Botts
Rick Jones
Jeff Mantes
Paula Vandehey

Others Present:

Mike Hess
Tracey McKenney (FHWA)
Todd Pierce (TDA)

LRSC Members Excused:

Bill Handlos (LWM)

Opening Business (Don Kush, Mary Forlenza)

The meeting was called to order shortly after 9 a.m.

Welcome Dennis Jordan and Roger Laning as new members to the Council.

The group welcomed Dennis and Roger as new members. Dennis Jordan is the City Administrator of Lake Geneva, and is representing the League of Wisconsin Municipalities. Roger Laning is the Sheboygan County Highway Commissioner, representing the Wisconsin Counties Association.

Review & Approval of December 2nd minutes

Minutes from December 2nd were reviewed and accepted as written.

Administrative Items

Confirm 2005 LRSC Council & Committee Calendars

The Executive Committee at its December 16th meeting established a four meeting Council schedule for calendar year 2005. The Infrastructure and Management Committee has also met and scheduled four meetings for 2005. Draft 2005 meeting schedules for the remaining four committees have been distributed and these committees need to finalize their 2005 schedules. The Regulatory, Environmental & Legislative (REAL) and Executive Committees meet on the same day at the same location, so they will need to coordinate dates.

New member Roger Laning has volunteered to Chair the Education and Communication Committee (E&C). Dennis Jordan will participate on the REAL Committee. Final committee rosters and meeting dates will be e-mailed to Council members and also posted on the LRSC webpage.

Draft Biennial Report for Review

Chair Don Kush submitted the draft report to WisDOT the last week of December 2004. The report will be sent back to Council leadership for final review, these changes will be incorporated, and the copy will be forwarded to the Secretary's Office for review and approval. The report will be available on the LRSC Webpage and a limited number of hard copies will be printed. Legislators and other interested parties will be notified of the Report's location on the WisDOT Internet site.

Recap of Secretary's Meeting with LRSC Executive Committee (Don Kush)

Don started the meeting with a brief summary of accomplishments and activities undertaken by the LRSC during the last two years. The majority of the discussion centered around two main themes: (1) impacts of WisDOT's re-organization and how it will affect local programs; and (2) biennial budget impacts for WisDOT and local governments.

While the Secretary could not go into much detail on the upcoming Governor's budget proposal, Frank did share that he anticipated the budget would not be as bad as some have feared. He was very positive and engaged the group in a dialogue of ideas for the LRSC to consider as priority. These include:

- Highway Maintenance, and the information that is currently being fed to the legislature from a wide variety of sources that do not share the local perspective.
- Perceived lack of local accountability by the legislature and others in areas such as General Transportation Aids (GTA).
- The on-going debate of a Wisconsin version of a Tax Payer Bill of Rights (TABOR), and how such an initiative could impact Wisconsin's *transportation* future.

The Secretary continues to be committed to the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) and its ongoing development, and is pleased the LRSC continues to develop proposed tools that encourage locals toward asset management of the local system.

The group expressed their concerns about the future of the administration of the local programs, and about how they would be affected by the reorganization plans currently being proposed by WisDOT. On the issue of WisDOT regionalization, the Secretary's Office is confident that it would be a good thing – a key opportunity for the department to capitalize on opportunities for significant efficiencies. When concerns were raised about losing WisDOT district staff that has advocated for them and with whom local have strong relationships, Frank commented "not under my watch."

The Council conversation gave the Secretary a good sense of what this regionalization approach might mean to the locals. One aspect is the mixing of rural vs. urban areas, and also the splitting or changing of some of the boundaries that previously occurred with current transportation districts. He is also aware of the contacts/relationships that have developed between individuals within the districts with locals.

He had very positive comments concerning the locals and their efforts, and committed to working with locals on many of these issues. The Secretary could not go into great detail on what WisDOT proposes concerning maintenance, but expressed his frustration about how this is being dealt with by the legislature. The state cannot continue building more highways without preserving the current system. The Secretary suggested that the LRSC work on informing the legislature of their impacts concerning the reduction in maintenance funding and how it is affecting not only the state system, but local systems as well.

Dan Fedderly commented that there would still be satellite offices where district offices presided, if this reorganization is approved. The Secretary suggested we change the message concerning the maintenance issue. The focus should move from the issue of dollars needed to provide the services, to what the services actually provide and how local governments and citizens are affected by the reductions that have occurred. This information must come from the LRSC and the associations. The Secretary has offered to provide any information or resources possessed by WisDOT to assist the Council in these efforts.

The Secretary will also be sending a letter to the legislature's Committee on Joint Finance informing them of the harsh winter we are currently having and how it is affecting the current resources of County Highway Departments across the state. This letter will be drafted in the coming weeks as an early warning to legislature if additional funding is needed to get through the entire winter.

Rick Jones stated the discussion went fairly well. The Secretary understands our concern about Highway maintenance vs. new Highways. The LRSC's efforts to tie pavement

analysis, pavement management and best practices together to show how GTA funding is used to obtain these goals and how locals are accountable for this funding was well received. Because GTA is one of the largest programs administered by WisDOT, locals need to prove how we are accountable for this funding and accountable for any increases in GTA funding in the future. The Secretary is supportive of our position and our efforts to address this issue.

Roger Laning re-emphasized the need to get the word out about GTA accountability and highway maintenance funding. It is very important that we address this during the current budget debate. We need to show the total picture of how GTA funding affects the local system, how local transportation aids work and any other assistance the state provides. The Secretary wants to help in these efforts and use our assistance, and we need to take him up on this offer.

Emmer stressed his belief that this was one of the best meetings the LRSC has had with any Secretary. WisDOT leadership was very engaged and active throughout the discussion. The council believes that the Secretary understood our concerns and he values the work of the LRSC and the products we are producing.

Products

The council received the completed GTA brochure. It is currently on the LRSC web site, and will be available February 18th for distribution. Scott Bush will provide the brochure to the various associations for them to distribute. It is very important that we get these into the hands of as many legislators as possible to educate them about GTA and what it is, but also how accountable local governments are in its usage. The brochure is a very effective and simple tool for this purpose.

A draft of the LRSC 10th Anniversary Logo was handed out for initial reaction. The anniversary date is in June of this year, and the logo will be finalized and in use by that date. Members provided specific feedback, and a final version will be approved by the E&C committee and brought back to the full council in May.

Next Steps for 2005 (Committee Chairs, Council)

Don noted two items that need particular follow-up:

- DNR streamlining proposal and the biennial budget
- WISLR – Paserware 3.0

Discussions between WisDOT and DNR continue on this issue. The LRSC will continue to monitor progress and provide any assistance to help make this a reality.

Infrastructure Management

WISLR and Paserware 3.0 are still not interactive and working together. Problems still exist between the platforms, and information cannot be up-loaded from Paserware to the WISLR date base if changes have occurred concerning road segmentations. WisDOT is actively working on a solution to this problem, and in the interim preparing a solution for local governments to begin compiling their pavement data for the end of the year submittal requirements.

A number of alternatives are being developed to help in these efforts. WisDOT is developing Web-WISLR, which can be used to provide the needed pavement data to WisDOT via the Internet. Beta testing will begin in May/June on this new tool. Web-WISLR should be available by summer of this year. Information and training concerning Web-WISLR will be provided in the coming months.

Locals will have three options on how they can provide their pavement ratings for 2005:

- 1) Web-WISLR (Preferred method by WisDOT to submit pavement ratings for 2005).
- 2) Microsoft Excel (Electronic) Spreadsheet.
- 3) Hard Copy (Paper Spreadsheet).

If no changes in segments have occurred, Paserware 3.0 can be used. If changes occur, locals should use one of the three methods above.

Work on needed improvements to Paserware 3.0 will be finalized by March 18th. Those who attended Paserware 3.0 sessions this past fall will be offered a refresher training session at no charge. The On-At referencing method will not be covered as part of the refresher training sessions, and the sessions will be a half-day. More information will be available as these details are finalized.

Education & Communication

The E&C Committee will be working on the Statewide Highway Maintenance Issue, and the impact of TABOR type legislation and its impact on transportation funding as it moves forward in the state legislature.

Regulatory, Environmental & Legislative

The REAL Committee will continue its efforts on DNR Streamlining of environmental permitting, the wetlands banking efforts with the Army Corp of Engineers, and the Over-Weight Trucking issue. Many of the associations are also working on these issues and we might work to coordinate our efforts with these groups.

Local Transportation Finance

The LTF Committee will continue to work on the GTA Incentive Initiative Program. Also, with the current reduction in transportation funding affecting local governments, the committee would like to begin looking into Regional Transportation Authorities (RTA's) proposals and if any of these will be moving forward in the coming year.

FHWA Review of Wisconsin's Local Program (Tracey McKenny)

Tracey presented the initial findings and recommendations from a review of Wisconsin's Local Program. State funded local programs were not included in this examination. The focus of this review was on the project development process (environmental review, design phase, and up to the preparation of the construction contract) rather than on programming and construction.

FHWA wanted to examine issues of compliance, federal requirements, ensure oversight of the program, and to look for how to improve delivery of these programs. FHWA believes that WisDOT is managing the local program well, particularly in the programming area. However,

the review did find several areas that need improvement, and FHWA will make recommendations to WisDOT concerning these issues.

For example:

- The program is not administered the same from District to District. FHWA understands that this is not necessarily a bad thing given that differences exist between districts, but would like to see more consistency in the processes and delivery of these programs.
- Need to work to better serve the specific goals of these programs.

This is the *Draft* report of FHWA's findings. WisDOT has been given the full report and is in the process of reviewing these findings and recommendations. WisDOT will then submit their responses to these findings and offer suggestions on how the FHWA will proceed with developing the final report. Tracey offered an opportunity for members of the LRSC to review the findings and recommendations, and provide feedback to FHWA in a timely manner (questions, comments, and/or concerns). WisDOT will forward the full draft report to the LRSC members for their review.

Recommendations from the full draft report are broken down by specific categories. A list of the main findings:

- WisDOT should reevaluate how it manages and oversees the local program. No specific template to this process and lots of options exist for how this could occur.
- WisDOT could pass more/different responsibilities onto the locals, but will always have a role as over-seer of this program. This is federally required.
- WisDOT could choose to expand the use of management consultants to oversee their statewide local program. (This is already occurring in two districts).
- Update procedures and providing adequate local program documentation.
- Adjust funding so that projects are funded in their entirety, not separately for design and construction, so these specific projects are built.
- Better documentation and consistency concerning the environmental process.
- Improve and simplify the Right-of-way process.
- Consider the possibility of lowering the standards for the local systems.
- Locals should have the opportunity to attend WisDOT's annual Design Opportunity Days.
- WisDOT needs to review and tighten consultant performance requirements.

This review did not cover the entire state, but was a representative sample of various types of completed local projects. The review also included interviews with WisDOT district and central office staff, stakeholders, and local officials.

It should also be noted that these are recommendations, not requirements. FHWA will be working with WisDOT on the final version of this report, and will point out the need to put in place some of these recommendations, or to make progress in implementing them in the future. WisDOT will not be forced to implement these recommendations, but if FHWA requirements are not being met, then WisDOT will need to take the necessary steps to rectify these situations. On such example is the formal approval by WisDOT of the Plans, Specifications and Estimates (PS&E) concerning specific projects. This is a federal requirement, and if it is not being done properly or consistently, WisDOT will need to meet these federal requirements.

Some members of the LRSC were concerned about the use of Local Force Account Procedures and how that will be affected by this report. Although this was an area that was

reviewed, nothing should be changing in this regard, but will be discussed with WisDOT before the finalization of the report. Tracey indicated that if locals continue to perform the Cost Effectiveness Findings (CEF) report and procedures, nothing should dramatically change.

WisDOT Response & Next Steps (Mary Forlenza)

FHWA's review confirms that overall Wisconsin continues to do a good job of managing the local programs. What WisDOT will be looking for as we review this report and FHWA's recommendations are how to balance the use of state resources and local resources concerning the local programs? Currently, outside of statewide policy, program and financial management, most of the work occurs in Infrastructure Development area and Transportation Districts.

Areas that we need to address:

- Implement SCOLPS recommendations. Not lose key improvements such as pre-scoping of local projects prior to application.
- The role of management consultants.
- The county role in these processes.
- Statewide consistency and fairness.

WisDOT will be looking at all of these areas as we work with FHWA on the final draft of this report. Solicitation for the 2007-2009 Local Program cycle is just beginning. Some of the adopted recommendations may be phased in some of these recommendations as we approve projects for these programs.

Committee Work plan Discussion (Breakout into Groups)

Education & Communication Committee (E&C)

From the discussion with the Secretary, the E&C committee will be taking a lead role in the development of materials concerning two important topics which will be shaping the legislatures agenda during the current biennial budget cycle. Those are:

- TABOR and what affect it will have on Transportation funding.
- Continued reductions in Maintenance funding.

The E&C committee will be working on specific examples and materials, which can be distributed to the various local associations to inform their representatives about how this is affecting both the state system and the local system, and the consequences that may affect economic growth in the future. WisDOT has offered to help provide information that may be useful in this process, and we will be working rapidly to develop information from a variety of sources. We will be developing a legislative calendar of the Transportation Conference Committee and Joint Finance Committee and distributing that to the council for information.

We will be distributing the GTA brochure to local associations and getting it into the hands of legislators and transportation committee members when it becomes available.

Because these two topics overlap with other LRSC committees, we will be conducting a joint meeting of the E&C – Finance – REAL Committees to coordinate our efforts during the last week of February, and report back to the council in May concerning materials or information we have developed and/or distributed.

Regulatory, Environmental, and Legislative (REAL)

- DNR environmental streamlining.
- Over-weight truck issue.
- Wetlands mitigation.
- Local program review by FHWA.
- Facilities Management Study.

Infrastructure Management (I&M)

- WISLR – Paserware 3.0 and the pavement submittal issues concerning 2005.
- Best Management Practices.
- Local Roads Element in *Connections 2030*.
- Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) 34 concerning Asset capitalization and depreciation.

Local Transportation Finance

Rick's committee will continue to work on the GTA incentive program and educating the legislature about how GTA funding is used and how accountable locals are concerning GTA funding. The Finance committee will also be developing materials to help locals incorporate Pavement Management Systems and tools into their local budget processes. These are all ongoing activities but we anticipate great strides on these efforts in 2005.

Closing Business

Agenda topics for May 26th Council Meeting:

- Results and progress from the joint meeting of E&C/Finance/REAL Committee concerning TABOR and Maintenance issues being discussed in the current biennial budget cycle
- Susie Forde (WisDOT) – Traffic Count Issue, WISLR/Paserware 3.0
- Connections 2030 and the Local Roads Element Update
- WisDOT District/Regional Corridor Planning Efforts

Meeting Adjourned at 1:30 pm